

# YOUR Health

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services • Public Health

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## DON'T BE CAUGHT WITH THE FLU THIS SEASON!

In Los Angeles County the flu season usually begins in December and lasts through March. Seniors, and individuals of any age with certain medical conditions, need to get a flu shot because they are at a higher risk for flu complications. During a typical flu season, 114,000 people are hospitalized with flu complications and on average nearly 20,000 people die nationwide.

### WHAT IS THE FLU?

Influenza, commonly called the "flu," is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs). The virus is usually spread from a sick person to another person through coughing or sneezing. Typical symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue. The flu can be serious and cause life-threatening complications. Children sometimes experience gastrointestinal illness like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, but these symptoms are not common in adults.

### HOW DO I AVOID THE FLU?

A flu shot is the best way to prevent the flu. The shot is needed every year because the virus frequently changes. Seniors and individuals at higher risk should get the flu shot in October or November; others can be vaccinated starting in November. Flu shots will prevent infection in 70-90% of healthy persons under age 65 years of age. For older adults, the flu shot may be a little less effective in preventing the flu but it is very effective in preventing flu complications, including death.

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## Be Street Smart for Halloween Night



With Halloween just around the corner, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services wants to make sure that parents are prepared for the holiday. (And we don't just mean stocked up on candy treats.) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more kids (5-15 years of age) get killed on Halloween night walking in the streets than on any other night. CDC warns parents that kids 5-15 years old are most likely to get hurt by falling down. Falls are the leading cause of injury on Halloween night.



### For more information:

- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**  
[www.missingkids.com/html/halloween.html](http://www.missingkids.com/html/halloween.html)
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.cdc.gov/safeusa/halloween.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/safeusa/halloween.htm)

### *The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has some suggestions to keep your children safe on Halloween night:*

1. Instead of trick or treating, organize a party at home or find out about community events that are scheduled for that evening to keep your kids off the streets.
2. Make sure that an adult accompanies younger children; teenagers should take a friend.
3. Adults should walk children all the way up to the door of every house.
4. Children must be warned not to enter any house or car without the permission of their parents.
5. Make sure children carry a glow stick or wear reflective clothing.
6. For children wearing masks, make sure that they can see and breathe properly.
7. Children should never approach a house that is dimly lit or whose porch light is not on.
8. Children should know that it is OK to scream and make a scene if anyone tries to grab them or force them, in any way, to go with them.
9. Parents should inspect all treats BEFORE the child eats any. Parents should throw away any candy that looks opened or tampered with.

## Flu Prevention: Continued from page 1



### WHO NEEDS A FLU SHOT?

The most important group of people who should receive a flu shot are people 65 years or older; residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities; persons with chronic conditions of the lung (including asthma) and heart, metabolic diseases (like diabetes), kidney disease, certain kinds of anemia, and immune system problems. Children and teens on long-term aspirin therapy, as well as women who will be in their second or third trimester of pregnancy during the flu season also need to get the flu shot. Others who need a flu shot are health care workers and people who provide care to or live with someone at high risk.

**Check with your regular health care provider to see when you will be able to receive the flu shot. Flu shots are also available to seniors (60 years and over) and other high-risk persons at special outreach clinics held throughout Los Angeles County during the fall. For more information on these clinics call 1-800-427-8700 or log on to: [www.lapublichealth.org](http://www.lapublichealth.org)**

### FLU FACTS:

1. You can be contagious for 5 days after you start feeling sick. Children can be contagious for a longer period of time. PLEASE take time off from work or social activities to avoid infecting others.
2. NEVER give a child or a teenager aspirin for flu symptoms. Aspirin can sometimes cause a rare disease that can be fatal called Reye Syndrome.
3. There are medications you can take for the flu. Check with your doctor regarding which medications are best for you.
4. Seniors and others at risk of flu complications should be immunized between October and November. However, if a senior, or a high-risk person missed getting the flu shot earlier he or she can get it through December, January and beyond – as long as vaccine is available. It takes 2 weeks, after receiving the shot, for a person to develop protective antibodies.
5. People living with seniors or other persons at risk for flu complications, as well as healthy 50-64 year olds, and others wanting to avoid getting the flu should be vaccinated starting in November.

**For more information about receiving flu shots covered by Medicare, call toll-free 1-800-638-6833 or visit Medicare's web site at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). For more information about influenza and CDC's recommendations for influenza vaccination, call 1-800-232-2522 (English) or 1-800-232-0233 (Spanish), or visit CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/nip](http://www.cdc.gov/nip).**

## Ten Tips for Your Thanksgiving Turkey



Thanksgiving means spending the day with family and friends and celebrating with lots of food. Unfortunately, food at potlucks and large gatherings usually sit out for a while, which can sometimes lead to food contamination and illness. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers several ideas to keep your guests healthy through the holiday festivities.

### Start at the supermarket.

- ☞ **Tip #1:** Choose your turkey last. Holiday grocery shopping often takes a lot of time. Don't let your turkey spoil before you cook it!
- ☞ **Tip #2:** The USDA strongly recommends not buying pre-stuffed turkey. The stuffing can prevent the meat from being cooked all the way through. Cook the stuffing, dressing and turkey separately.
- ☞ **Tip #3:** If your commute from the grocery store to your home is more than an hour, store your groceries in an ice-packed cooler during the drive.

### Let the cooking begin!

- ☞ **Tip #4:** Store turkey in the refrigerator or freezer as soon as possible. Remember to cover your turkey in a plastic bag set inside a pan to eliminate dripping on other foods.
- ☞ **Tip #5:** Wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds before and after touching the turkey (20 seconds is about as long as it usually takes to sing the first chorus of "Happy Birthday").
- ☞ **Tip #6:** For faster thawing, place the turkey in cold water for about 30 minutes per pound.
- ☞ **Tip #7:** There are three safe ways to defrost foods: in the refrigerator, in cold water and in the microwave. When using the microwave to defrost, follow the instructions on the food label and cook it immediately after it is defrosted.

- ☞ **Tip #8:** Always preheat the oven. Use a meat thermometer; make sure the turkey has an internal temperature of 180 degrees. When turkey is pierced with a fork, juices should run clear, not pink.

### Serving food:

- ☞ **Tip #9:** Use a different knife, fork or spoon for each dish that is served. When serving: Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!
- ☞ **Tip #10:** Leftovers should be stored within two hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey for 4 days. Remember...*when in doubt, throw it out.*

### Here are USDA estimated cooking times for your holiday turkey: (Temperature must be higher than 325 degrees)

8-12 lbs.....	2 hrs and 45 min – 3 hrs
12-14lbs.....	3 hrs – 3hrs and 45 min
14-18lbs.....	3 hrs and 45 min – 4 hrs and 15 min
18-20lbs.....	4 hrs and 15 min – 4 hrs and 30 min
20-24lbs.....	4 hrs and 30 min – 5 hrs

### For more information:

- **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-800-535-4555**  
*Special Thanksgiving Day hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time*
- **United States Food and Drug Administration [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)**
- **United States Department of Agriculture [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)**

# Preventing Falls Among Older Adults

Chances are you've tripped and fallen down many times as a child and even as an adult. A scraped knee or sprained ankle was probably the worst result of your tumble. However, when you become older, falling down can have serious consequences.

Among seniors, a broken bone is the most serious health consequence that can happen after a fall. In particular, hip fractures can lead to severe health problems and even death. Half of seniors who need to be hospitalized for hip fractures cannot return home or live independently after they get hurt.

Among seniors (age 65 and older), falls are the number one cause of death from injuries. In the U.S., one of every three adults, 65 years old or older, falls each year.

## Tips for preventing falls among older adults

Many falls can be prevented. SafeUSA and the Centers for DiseaseControl and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov/safeusa/olderfalls.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/safeusa/olderfalls.htm)) offer these tips that can lower your chances of falling .

### *Begin a regular exercise program.*

Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful. Ask your doctor or health care worker about the best type of exercise program for you.

### *Have your health care provider review your medicines.*

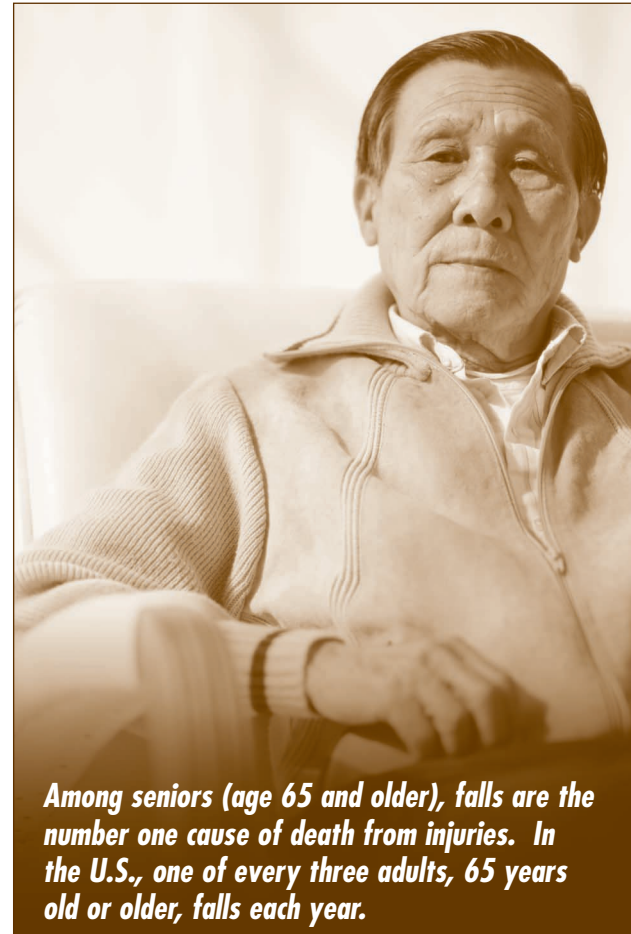
Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take (including ones that don't need prescriptions such as cold medicines). As you get older, the way some medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you drowsy or light-headed, which can lead to a fall.

### *Have your vision checked.*

You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition such as glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

### *Make your home safer.*

- ◆ Because half of all falls take place at home, it is important to make sure your home is safe.
- ◆ Remove things that you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- ◆ Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep rugs from slipping.
- ◆ Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- ◆ Have "grab bars" put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- ◆ Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- ◆ Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- ◆ Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- ◆ Wear shoes that give good support and have thin non-slip soles. Avoid wearing slippers and athletic shoes with deep treads.



***Among seniors (age 65 and older), falls are the number one cause of death from injuries. In the U.S., one of every three adults, 65 years old or older, falls each year.***

**For more information call SafeUSA at 1-888-252-7751**



# Family Fire Prevention Tips for Fall

**Kitchens, space heaters and smoking devices (i.e. cigarettes, pipes, cigars) are the leading fire hazards that affect the elderly.**

## KITCHENS

- ♦ Most kitchen fires occur when something is left on the stove or in the oven.
- ♦ If you have to leave the kitchen, take a potholder or wooden spoon with you as a reminder to return to the kitchen.
- ♦ Never cook with loose dangling sleeves that could ignite easily.
- ♦ Always heat oil gradually, and use extra caution when deep-frying.
- ♦ Never throw water on a grease fire. Instead, put a lid over the fire and let it sit.
- ♦ Never use your stove or oven to heat your home.

## SPACE HEATERS

- ♦ Buy only Underwriters' Laboratory (UL) approved space heaters.
- ♦ Use only the manufacturer's recommended fuel for the space heater.
- ♦ Do not use space heaters in the bathroom or any wet area.
- ♦ Do not store anything on top of your space heaters.
- ♦ Keep space heaters away from combustibles (i.e. papers, shag rugs, electronics).

## SMOKING

- ♦ Do not leave smoking materials unattended.
- ♦ Always use "safety ashtrays" with wide lips.
- ♦ Empty all ashtrays into the toilet or water before you go to bed each night.
- ♦ Never smoke in bed.

Fall is a time for colored leaves, brisk winds and cozy fires. However, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) reminds us that fall is also a time when dangerous fires tend to break out that can destroy property and threaten lives. During Fire Prevention Week (October 7-13), take the time to learn fire safety strategies:

1. Install smoke alarms outside each bedroom and on every floor of your home, including the basement. According to CDC's "Safe USA" program, smoke alarms can cut your chances of dying from a fire in half.
2. Make a family fire escape plan and practice it every six months. You typically have two minutes to get outside of a burning house. Plan two different ways for each person to escape and choose a place outside to meet. Never go back into a burning house.
3. Teach children to STOP, DROP, and ROLL. If your child's clothing catches fire tell them to STOP where they are, DROP to the ground, and ROLL over and over while covering their face.

## Fire Safety for Seniors

Over 1,200 Americans over the age of 65 will die as a result of a fire each year. Older adults comprise more than 25 percent of all fire deaths of all ages, and 30 percent of fire deaths that occur in the home. Surprised? Depending on their physical limitations, senior citizens may be less able to take quick action in an emergency situation. Many of the safety actions they need to take may require the help of a family member, caregiver or neighbor. Medication may affect their ability to make quick decisions. Please make sure seniors in your family know about fire safety.

### USFA information on fire safety for seniors:

- ♦ *Identify the Nearest Emergency Exit:* Whether you are at home or elsewhere you should always know where the closest emergency exit is located. It could save your life!
- ♦ *Heed Fire Safety and Design Guidelines:* Make sure that you and your loved ones are able to get through door ways and walkways that are able to fit the wheelchair, walker, cane, or aid device that the person may need.
- ♦ *Install and Maintain Smoke Detectors:* Caregivers are encouraged to check the smoke alarms of those who are unable to do it themselves. The chances of surviving a home fire almost doubles with the initial warning of a smoke detector.
- ♦ *Don't isolate yourself:* Speak to your family members, building manager, or neighbors about your safety plan and explain it to them. Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.

**For more information on fire safety go to [www.cdc.gov/safeusa/fire/firesafe.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/safeusa/fire/firesafe.htm) or call the USFA at 1-800-238-3358**



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